

BOOK REVIEWS

THE EPITOME OF ANDREAS VESALIUS. Translated by L. R. Lind, Ph.D., The Macmillan Company, 1949. \$7.50.

Four centuries ago, in 1543, there issued from the press at Basle the *De humani corporis fabrica* of Andreas Vesalius of Brussels and simultaneously the *Epitome* of that work. Sir William Osler regarded the *Fabrica* as the greatest medical book ever written; and therefore it is most appropriate that this, his centennial year, should see the appearance of the first English translation of the *Epitome*.

These two publications of Vesalius have rightly come to be regarded as the first positive achievement of modern science and mark the transition from the purely speculative and rationalistic approach to knowledge of the medieval period to the objective and observational method of today. With them, not only was the basic science of anatomy established but the printed book achieved with abrupt suddenness its perfection as a medium for the spread of exact scientific information by the development of the illustration in intimate relation to the written word. Furthermore, the blending of humanist, artist and modern man of science established a tradition whose influences extend to our times and created a prototype of medical man whose characteristics distinguish the great physician.

That every English-speaking physician may appreciate this great heritage, Professor L. R. Lind provides us with a magnificent translation of the shorter *Epitome* of the *Fabrica*. The translation has been placed in its setting by a brief but excellent introduction and is accompanied by copious and useful explanatory notes provided by C. W. Asling. The work is completed by a facsimile of the original text and the illustrations which have been reduced to approximately half-size. Finally, the author has incorporated as an appendix the marginal terms employed by Vesalius which form the basis of modern anatomical terminology.

The *Epitome* of Vesalius, despite its title, is in point of fact not an epitome of the *Fabrica* at all, but a separate work written in didactic fashion and intended to serve as an introductory manual to the science of anatomy or, as described by its author, to serve as a foot-path beside the highway of the larger work. Owing to the brevity and conciseness of its style, the book was an immediate success and rapidly was thumbed out of existence to become one of the rarest works in the history of medicine. Its translation presents numerous problems largely due to the fact that many of the terms employed in the sixteenth century have largely disappeared from our language. Nevertheless, the translator has overcome these difficulties in most commendable fashion to provide a rendering which is extremely faithful and which retains much of the flavor of the original.

The publication of this English version of the *Epitome* is an event of the first importance. Translator, commentator and publisher are to be congratulated in making available one of the great works of our civilization. It should be in the hands of every physician that he may read the very words of a great master and appreciate his heritage.

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CLINICAL ALLERGY. By Louis Tuft, M.D., Assistant Professor of Medicine, Temple University School of Medicine. Second Edition. Lea & Febiger, Philadelphia. 1949. \$12.00.

The first edition of this volume appeared about a decade ago. The expanding knowledge of allergy during this period justified a rewriting of practically the entire book. The author has maintained the high standards of his previous edition. There have been added chapters on antihistamine

therapy, aerosol therapy and the relation of fungi-allergic disease. There is considerable repetition of material, as for example methods and principles of treatment of allergic conditions in Chapter V which are repeated in substance in Chapter XVI. The author has included in the above chapters methods of therapy and drugs which have long been discredited and discontinued by specialists and practitioners. Chapter V is particularly complete and useful to the student and general practitioner. The author apparently believes that skin tests are valuable and important as a part of the study of the allergic individual.

Illustrations are limited to the practical and instructive type that are valuable to the general practitioner for whom the book was written.

The section on allergic dermatoses will be found most useful, particularly from the diagnostic standpoint and valuable for the information offered on therapy.

Chapter XXV is actually unnecessary since the clinical manifestations of allergy in children and their treatment are similar in most respects to those of adults.

One will find the appendix very helpful. It contains laboratory methods employed in allergy research (certainly not for the general practitioner), preparation of allergens (usually purchased by the general practitioner), pollen counting, lists of household materials that contain possible allergens, various diets, milk free, egg free, wheat free.

The author limits his bibliography to standard textbooks on allergy. However, he quotes authorities throughout the text, which is unfair to the reader since he cannot check the reference.

This book will be found valuable by the general practitioner, the medical student, and the specialist who seek quick and reliable information of the up-to-date advances in the field of allergy, since it deals with commonly encountered clinical problems and discusses the rationale for the therapeutic measures recommended.

Tuft should be in the possession of every physician interested in allergy.

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LIFE AMONG THE DOCTORS. By Paul De Kruif. Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1949. \$4.75.

This is an interesting but somewhat excitably written potpourri of fact, fancy and fiction. In 470 pages the author takes you through parts of the lives of about a dozen contemporary physicians, ranging from Tom Spies to Mr. Henry Kaiser's medical manager. He is not enamored of the editor of the *Journal* of the A.M.A. and states in the preface that that association has recently taken "an historic step ahead for the health of the American people." Equally extravagant statements occur regularly throughout the rest of the book. He refers to the American Medical Association as "the most solid of all our country's unions." An old Michigan friend is a doctor who "over a period of 20 years saved more lives than all Michigan's doctors put together." This same friend developed a renal tumor and took "the months of agony of deep x-ray bombardment to shrink the tumor, ending up with a terrific operation." He lived over five years more. Incidentally, in or about 1940 these same "Michigan doctors were beginning to change from kindly bedside bumbler into crack diagnosticians and public healthmen." This was 1940, a good year for corn, no doubt.

In June of the same year the author journeyed with Dr. Karl Meyer to "one of California's most prosperous county medical societies" . . . where "the gleaming streamlined